

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 EA-06 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8077

INFO AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

USLO PEKING

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 NEW DELHI 4921

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, IN, SK

SUBJECT: SIKKIM

SUMMARY: THE SIKKIM ASSEMBLY IS PRESSING BOTH FOR THE REMOVAL OF THE CHOGYAL AND FOR FULL ADMISSION AS A "CONSTITUENT UNIT" TO THE INDIAN UNION. MRS. GANDHI AND FOREIGN MINISTER CHAVAN HAVE LET IT BE KNOWN IN LETTERS TO THE PRINCIPAL ANTAGONISTS IN GANGTOK THAT THE GOI CONTINUES TO LEAN HEAVILY IN FAVOR OF THE ASSEMBLY, THE KAZI AND "THE PEOPLE OF SIKKIM" AND AGAINST THE CHOGYAL. IN AN OFFICIAL STATEMENT FOREIGN MINISTER CHAVAN DECLARED THAT THE TWO SIKKIM ASSEMBLY DEMANDS "ARE BEING STUDIED." END SUMMARY.

1. THE SIKKIM ASSEMBLY ADOPTED A RESOLUTION APRIL 10 WHICH DECLARED THAT THE INSTITUTION OF THE CHOXYAL IS HEREBY ABOLISHED AND SIKKIM SHALL HENCEFORET BE A CONSTITUENT UNIT OF INDIA." TWENTY-NINE OF THE THIRTY-TWO MEMBERS OF THE SIKKIM ASSEMBLY WERE SAID TO HAVE ATTENDED THE EMERGENCY
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SESSION AND TO HAVE APPROVED THE RESOLUTION. THE ASSEMBLY

ALSO SEPCIFIED THAT TIS RESOLUTION "BE SUBMITTED TO THE PEOPLE FOR THEIR APPROVAL" AND THAT THEGOVERNMENT OF INDIA TAKE "APPROPRIATE MEASURES"FOR ITS IMPLEMENTATION SHOULD IT BE APPROVED. REPORTS FROM GANGTOK INDICATE THAT A "SPECIAL POLL" WILL BE HELD APRIL 14 SO THAT THE SIKKIMESE PEOPLE CAN MAKE THEIR DECISION. IN THE MEANTIME THE CHOGYAL IS REPORTEDLY BEING "GUARDED" IN HIS PALACE COMPOUND BY INDUI ARMY UNITS.

2. EXTRACTS OF A LETTER SENT BY MRS. GANDHI IN THE PAST DAY OR SO TO THE KAZI WERE MADE AVAILABLE TO THE DELHI PRESS APRIL 10. THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THE GOI WAS "DEEPLY DISAPPOINTED" TO NOTE THE "CRITICAL" SITUATION WHICH HAS ARISEN. SHE INDICATED THE GOI HAD RECEIVED A NUMBER OF REPORTS AND REPRESENTATIONS FROM SIKKIM ABOUT THE "OBSTRUCTIVE METHODS" THAT HAVE BEEN USED AGAINST THE ELECTED SIKKIMESE REPRESENTATIVES. "WE WERE PARTICULARLY SHOCKED TO KNOW OF THE STABBING OF MEMBERS OF THE SIKKIM ASSEMBLY AND REPORTS OF ASSASSINATION ATTEMPS AGAINST POPULAR LEADERS." MRS. GANDHI WROTE FURTHER THAT "THE PROCESS OF CHANGE TO DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT IS NOT AN EASY ONE AND SO WE HAVE COUNSELLED PATIENCE TO YOU AND YOUR COLLEAGUES," HOPING THAT THE "UNIQUE EXPERIMENT BEING TRIED OUT IN SIKKIM MIGHT YET SUCCEED." SHE CITED THE "MANY DIFFICULTIES CREATED BY VESTED INTERESTS" AND EXPRESSED "SYMPATHY AND ADMIRATION" FOR THE KAZI'S EFFORTS "TO ESTABLISH AN EFFICIENT ADMINISTRATION DEVOTED TO SERVING THE PEOPLE..." SHE EXTENDED THE GOI'S "FULL SUPPORT TO THE ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GOVERNMENT OS SIKKIM, ESPECIALLY WHEN THE PRESERVATION AND STRENGTHENING OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT AND THE WELFARE OF THE PEOPLE OF SIKKIM ARE CONCERNED."

3. AT THE SAME TIME THE DELHI PRESS HAS REPORTED EXTRACTS FROM A LETTER SENT BY FOREIGN MINISTER CHAVAN TO THE CHOGYAL IN RESPONSE TO THE CHOGYAL'S RECENT LETTER TO THE PRIME MINISTER. ADDRESSING THE CHOGYAL AT TIMES IN THE THIRD-PERSON, CHAVAN CITED THE NUMEROUS REPRESENTATIONS COMING FROM SIKKIMESE LEADERS WHICH "INDICATE THAT THEY HAVE FOUND THE CHOGYAL NOT ONLY TO BE WANTING IN HIS DUTY TO FUNCTION

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AS A CONSTITUTIONAL HEAD OF THE GOVERNMENT BUT ALL HIS ACTIONS AND STATEMENTS IN RECENT MONTHS HAVE BEEN IN COMPLETE DISREGARD OF THAT ROLE." CONTINUING, HE WROTE THAT "I TRUSHY IT IS NOT NECESSARY FOR ME TO REPZOT THE GOI'S SINCERE AND CONSISTENT OFFORTS OVER SEVERAL YEARS TO PROTECT AND PRESERVE THE INSTITUTION OF THE CHOGYAL." AFTER POINTING TO SUCH EFFORTS (IN 1949 AND 1973), CHAVAN SAID THAT "WE HAVE ALL ALONG BEEN HOPEFUL THAT YOU WOULD SHOW UNDER-

STANDING AND KEEP PACE WITH THE MARCH TOWARDS DEMOCRATIZATION. THESE HOPES HAVE BEEN BELIED." IN PERHAPS THE KEY SENTENCE, CHAVAN DECLARED THAT "WHILE THE GOVERNMENT WILL DO ALL IT CAN TO PROTECT THE INSTITUTION OF THE CHOGYAL, ITS PRIMARY DUTY IS TOWARDS THE WELFARE OF THE COMMON PEOPLE AND THEIR ASPIRATIONS FOR DEMOCRATIC REFORMS AND FOR SPEEDY SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT."

4. THE GOI'S OFFICIAL POSITION ON THE EVENTS TO DATE IN SIKKIM WAS PRESENTED IN THE LOWER HOUSE OF PARLIAMENT BY FOREIGN MINISTER CHAVAN AT MIDDAY APRIL 11. READING FROM A PREPARED STATEMENT, CHAVAN EXPLAINED THAT THE GOI HAS LONG TRIED TO PROTECT THE INSTITUTION OF THE CHOGYAL EVEN THOUGH THE PRINCELY ORDER HAD BEEN ABOLISHED IN THE CASE OF THE PRINCELY STATES. DESPITE DEMANDS FOR THE CHOGYAL'S REMOVAL AND A WARNING LAST SEPTEMBER FROM THE SIKKIM CHIEF MINISTER THAT IF DEMOCRACY WAS TO SURVIVE, THE CHOGYAL MUST GO, " WE HAVE COUNSELLED RESTRAINT IN THE HOPE AND EXPECTATION THAT THE CHOGYAL WOULD ULTIMATELY RECONCILE HIMSELF TO HIS CONSTITUTIONAL ROLE AND ADOPT A MORE CONSTRUCTIVE ATTITUDE." CHAVAN SAID THE SITUATION IN SIKKIM HAS NOW REACHED A "CRITICAL PHASE" AND IT HAS BECOME CLEAR THAT THE CHOGYAL WAS NOT RECONCILED TO HIS ROLE BUT "WAS DETERMINED TO OBSTRUCT THE FUNCTIONING OF THE DEMOCRATICALLY ELECTED GOVERNMENT THROUGH ALL MEANS AT HIS DISPOSAL." WHILE THE GOI HAD HOPED "GOOD SENSE AND WISDOM WOULD PREVAIL ON THE PART OF THE CHOGYAL," "THESE HOPES HAVE BEEN BELIED." SAYING THAT THE CHOGYAL'S ACTIONS OVER THE LAST FEW MONTHS "HAVE BEEN DELIBERATELY DIRECTED TOWARDS CREATING A CRISIS SITUATION IN THE STATE," CHAVAN POINTED TO "HIS STATEMENTS QUESTIONING THE VALIDITY OF THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS AND EVEN THE GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM ACT," HIS PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN, AND "EFFORTS TO INTIMIDATE, TERRORISE, THREATEN AND EVEN PHYSICALLY HARM POLITICAL LEADERS

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AND COMMON PEOPLE IN SIKKIM IN A BID TO DISRUPT LAW AND

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ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 EA-06 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00

SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02 NSC-05

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8078

INFO AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU IMMEDIATE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 NEW DELHI 4921

ORDER, OBSTRUCT THE FUNCTIONING OF THE GOVERNMENT AND SUBVERT THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS." THE BORDER STABBING INCIDENT AND INFORMATION ON THE ALLEGED "PLANS TO USE VIOLENCE AGAINST ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES" WERE ALSO CITED BY CHAVAN.

5. THE INDIAN FOREIGN MINISTER FURTHER EXPLAINED THAT HE DESPATCHED THE FOREIGN SECRETARY TO GANGTOK LAST WEEK TO IMPRESS ON THE CHOGYAL THAT HE SHOULD COOPERATE WITH THE SIKKIM GOVERNMENT INSTEAD OF SEEKING CONFRONTATION, AND TO WARN HIM THAT THE SITUATION COULD REACH A CRISIS IF "EFFORTS TO IMPEDE THE FUNCTIONING OF THE GOVERNMENT, INSULT THE ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES AND INTIMIDATE THEM IN VARIOUS WAYS CONTINUED..." CHAVAN SAID IT WAS NOW EVIDENT THAT THIS EFFORT DID NOT HAVE THE DESIRED EFFECT. CHAVAN COMMENTED ON THE DISARMING OF THE PALACE GUARDS, SAYING THERE WAS NO JUSTIFICATION FOR SUCH A PRIVATE ARMY FUNDED BY THE PUBLIC EXCHEQUER, AND THAT THE DISARMING WAS RENDERED A MATTER OF OF URGENCY WHEN EVIDENCE OF GUARD COMPLICITY IN A POSSIBLE CONSPIRACY AGAINST THE CHIEF MINISTER WAS UNCOVERED.

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6. CHAVAN CONCLUDED BY NOTING THE DEMAND BY SIKKIM LEADERS FOR "ACCORDING TO THE ELECTED GOVERNMENT FULL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES ON PAR WITH A CONSTITUENT UNIT OF THE INDIAN UNION." CHAVAN CHARACTERIZED THE REQUEST AS AN EXPRESSION OF THE "TRADITIONAL SENTIMENT AND POPULAR WISH IN SIKKIM TO FULLY PARTICIPATE IN THE MAINSTREAM OF INDIAN LIFE." CHAVAN SAID THAT THE IMPLICATIONS OF THIS DEMAND, ALONG WITH "THE DEMAND FOR THE ABOLITION OF THE INSTITUTION OF THE CHOGYAL,"

"ARE BEING STUDIED" BY THE GOI.

7 COMMENT: WE REALLY ARE UNABLE AT THIS POINT TO SHED ANY FURTHER LIGHT ON THE DEVELOPMENTS IN GANGTOK. WE HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO GET TO ANYONE IN MEA. AP HAS SENT A CALCUTTA STRINGS UP TO GANGTOK WHO WILL BEGIN SENDING IN REPORTS PROBABLY TOMORROW. WE CONTINUE TO INTUIT THAT THE GOI IS BEING FORCED INTO ACTIONS IT WOULD RATHER NOT TAKE AS A RESULT OF THE CHOGYAL'S AND KAZI'S MOVES AND MUTAL ANTAGONISM. IT HAS BEEN CLEAR FOR THE LAST TWO YEARS, HOWEVER, THAT WHILE THE GOI MAY NOT TRUST THE KAZI MUCH MORE THAN THE CHOGYAL, IF IT IS FORCED TO CHOOSE TI WILL CERTAINLY OPT FOR "THE PEOPLE."

8. THE GOI WILL BE WATCHING THE NEPALESE AND CHINESE REACTIONS CLOSELY. AP HAS ASKED US "OFF THE RECORD" WHAT OUR VIEW OF THE SIKKIM SITUATION IS AND WE HAVE NOTED THAT IT IS AN INTERNAL INDIAN PROBLEM AS FAR AS THE USG IS CONCERNED.

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